

Analysis of emotional dynamics, behavior, and learning motivation of students addicted to online games and their handling strategies: Case study at ma futuhiyyah kudu semarang

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the impact of online game addiction on students' emotional dynamics, behavior, and learning motivation, as well as to identify the handling strategies implemented at MA Futuhiyyah Kudu Semarang. The research employed a descriptive qualitative method, with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that online game addiction significantly affects three main aspects. First, the emotional aspect, characterized by emotional instability, irritability, and the emergence of anxiety when not playing. Second, the behavioral aspect, which includes a decline in discipline, tardiness, disrupted sleep patterns, procrastination, and low participation in social and religious activities. Third, the learning motivation aspect, which decreases both intrinsically and extrinsically, with students showing more interest in in-game achievements than in academic performance. The handling strategies implemented include solution-focused individual counseling, digital literacy socialization, restrictions on mobile phone use at school, integration of Islamic moderation values into learning, and the provision of alternative activities. Nevertheless, their effectiveness remains limited due to a lack of counseling resources, low parental understanding, and student resistance. This study recommends a holistic approach involving synergy between teachers, parents, and the social environment, with an emphasis on self-control and balanced use of technology in accordance with Islamic values

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Introduction

The development of digital technology has transformed the way the younger generation spends their time, including through online games, which have now become a global phenomenon. When used wisely, online games can provide entertainment, sharpen strategic thinking, and foster teamwork. However, excessive use can lead to addiction that disrupts life balance. Islam teaches the principle of moderation in all activities, as stated in the Qur'an: *"Eat and drink, but do not be excessive"* (QS Al-A'raf [7]:31), which is equally relevant in regulating the use of technology. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also said: *"Part of the perfection of one's Islam is leaving that which does not concern him"* (HR. Tirmidhi no. 2317). These two sources affirm that recreational activities must not interfere with primary obligations, whether in worship or education.

Online game addiction can affect three fundamental aspects of student development: emotions, behavior, and learning motivation. Emotional instability caused by excessive gaming can trigger maladaptive behaviors such as procrastinating tasks, neglecting study time, and reducing positive social interactions (Goleman, 2018). These behavioral changes, in turn, affect learning motivation—both intrinsic motivation (the drive to learn based on interest) and extrinsic motivation (the drive from external factors such as grades or rewards) (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In Indonesia, this

phenomenon is increasingly concerning. Data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) in 2024 show that more than 60% of internet users in the teenage demographic actively play online games, with an average duration of more than three hours per day (APJII, 2024). Such lengthy playing time can shift learning priorities, especially in the absence of adequate supervision from families or schools. Several previous studies confirm the link between online game addiction and declining learning motivation.

A qualitative study by Sari (2021), titled *The Effect of Online Game Addiction on High School Students' Academic Achievement*, used a case study approach on ten students at a high school in Jakarta. The findings showed that online game addiction resulted in decreased learning motivation, tardiness, and poor time management. This study emphasized behavioral aspects and academic performance but did not explore in depth the emotional dimension and students' psychological dynamics (Sari, 2021). Another qualitative study by Ramadhani (2022), titled *"The Impact of Mobile Game Addiction on Teenagers' Social Interaction"* at a junior high school in Bandung, found that students with gaming addiction tended to withdraw socially, experienced sleep disturbances, and showed emotional changes such as irritability and frustration. This research focused more on social interaction and physiological effects than on learning motivation (Ramadhani, 2022).

In contrast to these two studies, the present research does not only examine behavioral impacts or social interactions but comprehensively analyzes the emotional dynamics, behavior, and learning motivation of students addicted to online games, particularly in the context of Islamic schooling (MA Futuhiyyah Kudu Semarang). Furthermore, it combines field findings from preliminary observations and in-depth interviews with theoretical analysis of learning motivation and emotional regulation, providing a more holistic view of the phenomenon in Islamic educational settings. Nevertheless, a research gap remains. Most previous studies discussed only one or two variables, such as motivation or behavior, without integrating all three aspects—emotions, behavior, and motivation into a single analytical framework. Even fewer studies linked this phenomenon to Islamic values derived from the Qur'an and Hadith. Moreover, another study notes that Indonesia has over 43 million active gamers, making it one of the largest gaming markets in the world (Wikipedia, 2025). This underscores the importance of in-depth research in religious schools, where the impact of online game addiction can extend beyond academics to include spiritual and social domains.

Preliminary observations conducted at MA Futuhiyyah Kudu Semarang revealed that several students displayed signs of online game addiction, such as frequently discussing games outside of recess, reduced focus during lessons, delays in submitting assignments, and drowsiness in class. Informal interviews with teachers indicated that some students preferred accessing games over participating in extracurricular activities or reviewing lesson materials at home. These findings strengthen the assumption that online game addiction in a madrasah setting can affect students' academic performance and religious conduct. As a religion-based senior high school, MA Futuhiyyah Kudu Semarang provides an important research context because the effects of online game addiction have the potential to disrupt not only academic achievement but also worship commitment, social ethics, and study discipline. This phenomenon demands an analysis that integrates educational perspectives with Islamic teachings.

From a theoretical perspective, this study refers to self-regulation theory, which posits that individuals who can control their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are more likely to achieve learning goals (Zimmerman, 2002). In addition, Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory of learning motivation is used to assess how students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are influenced by online gaming behavior. Integrating these two theories helps explain the complex relationship between online game addiction, emotional states, and students' academic achievement.

The novelty of this research lies in its holistic approach: analyzing the interrelation of emotions, behavior, and learning motivation among students addicted to online games in a religious school environment while incorporating Islamic moderation principles. This approach is rarely applied in similar studies and is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions that are more comprehensive. Moreover, social factors such as parenting styles, peer

influence, and environmental pressures act as determinants that can strengthen or weaken online gaming addiction. Santrock (2021) notes that family environments lacking guidance tend to accelerate the development of uncontrolled gaming habits.

Teachers play a key role in preventing and addressing online game addiction. Through strengthening digital literacy, providing counseling, and delivering engaging lessons, teachers can help students manage their time more effectively. In madrasahs, this approach can be reinforced with the integration of moral values and ethical responsibility taught in Islam (Abdullah, 2020). However, intervention efforts face challenges such as limited counseling resources, insufficient teacher understanding of the psychological impacts of gaming addiction, and student resistance to gaming restrictions. This calls for collaborative strategies between schools, families, and communities.

Based on this background, this research focuses on: (1) describing the emotional dynamics of students experiencing online game addiction, (2) identifying emerging behavioral changes, (3) assessing the effects of addiction on learning motivation, and (4) formulating moderation-based strategies grounded in Islamic values. This study is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of student guidance models and practically to provide recommendations for madrasahs and families.

Theoretical Framework

Online game addiction is an addictive behavioral condition characterized by an individual's inability to control the duration and frequency of playing games despite being aware of its negative impacts. According to Griffiths (2019, p. 39), game addiction includes symptoms such as loss of control, increased tolerance, and withdrawal symptoms when not playing. This phenomenon falls under the category of *Internet Gaming Disorder*, as identified by the American Psychiatric Association (APA, 2013, p. 795). From the perspective of developmental psychology, adolescence is a stage in which individuals undergo significant changes in emotional, cognitive, and social aspects. Santrock (2021, p. 98) explains that adolescents' emotional development is strongly influenced by external stimuli, including digital entertainment. When online games become the primary source of pleasure, adolescents are vulnerable to emotional dependency, which may interfere with their developmental tasks.

The emotional dynamics of adolescents addicted to games often involve mood instability, irritability, or excessive euphoria while playing. Goleman (2018, p. 54) refers to this condition as an indication of weak emotional regulation skills. Emotional regulation is the ability to control emotional responses to remain adaptive in various situations. When this ability is impaired, students find it difficult to focus on learning.

Beyond the emotional aspect, online game addiction also impacts behavior. Skinner (1974, p. 101) posits that human behavior is shaped through reinforcement. In the context of online games, a fast and consistent reward system reinforces the habit of continuous play. This can shift students' priorities from academic activities to gaming. Common behavioral changes among addicted students include a decline in study discipline, tardiness, and disrupted sleep patterns. Carskadon (2011, p. 59) states that sleep deprivation significantly affects concentration and working memory, which in turn reduces academic achievement. Over the long term, such behaviors can become entrenched habits that are difficult to change without proper intervention.

Learning motivation is a crucial factor in determining students' academic success. Deci and Ryan (2000, p. 68) distinguish between two types of motivation: intrinsic motivation, which stems from interest and curiosity, and extrinsic motivation, which is influenced by external factors such as grades or rewards. Game addiction can reduce intrinsic motivation because students' attention shifts to the instant gratification provided by games. From the perspective of self-determination theory, intrinsic motivation develops when individuals feel adequate autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 126). While online games may offer a sense of competence through level or score achievements, these are not always relevant to academic learning, thus limiting their positive effect on formal learning motivation.

Zimmerman's (2002, p. 66) self-regulation theory explains that students who can manage their thoughts, emotions, and behavior are more likely to achieve learning goals. Among students addicted to games, self-regulation skills are often low, as evidenced by difficulty in managing study and play time as well as failure to meet academic targets. From a social interaction standpoint, Vygotsky (1978, p. 88) emphasizes the importance of social interaction in cognitive development. Students who spend excessive time playing online games tend to reduce face-to-face interactions with peers, which may hinder the development of social and collaborative skills needed in the learning process.

From an Islamic educational perspective, wise use of time is part of the trust (*amanah*) that must be upheld. Al-Ghazali (2010, p. 112) asserts that neglecting to use time for beneficial purposes can harm the heart and reduce the quality of worship. Online game addiction that leads students to neglect learning and worship clearly contradicts this principle. The concept of moderation in Islam is also relevant for regulating technology use. QS Al-A'raf [7]:31 commands Muslims not to be excessive in any matter, including entertainment. A hadith narrated by Tirmidhi (no. 2317) emphasizes that leaving matters of no benefit is a sign of a person's good Islam. These principles serve as normative foundations for shaping students' behavior in madrasahs. The phenomenon of online game addiction among students is also influenced by environmental factors. Bronfenbrenner's (2005, p. 133) ecological systems theory explains that family, school, and community play major roles in shaping children's behavior. Lack of parental supervision and weak school regulations can accelerate the formation of uncontrolled gaming habits.

Addressing online game addiction requires collaborative strategies. Epstein (2011, p. 78) states that parental involvement in children's education has a significant impact on their learning behavior. Teachers, parents, and schools must work together to set rules, provide guidance, and offer alternative positive activities for students. The use of educational games (*game-based learning*) can be a solution to channel students' gaming interest toward activities that support learning. Gee (2007, p. 34) argues that well-designed educational games can enhance learning motivation through challenges that are relevant to the curriculum.

In conclusion, this theoretical review affirms that online game addiction affects students' emotions, behavior, and learning motivation through complex psychological and social mechanisms. Self-regulation theory, learning motivation theory, social interaction theory, and Islamic educational principles provide a comprehensive analytical framework for understanding this phenomenon, while also serving as a foundation for formulating effective intervention strategies.

Method

This study employed a qualitative case study approach, chosen to explore in depth the emotional dynamics, behavior, and learning motivation of students experiencing online game addiction at MA Futuhiyyah Kudu Semarang (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case study design was deemed appropriate as it provides a rich and contextual understanding of a specific phenomenon within the school setting (Yin, 2018). The research site, MA Futuhiyyah Kudu Semarang, was selected based on indications of online game addiction among students, as observed in preliminary assessments by the school's guidance and counseling (BK) teacher. The research subjects consisted of five students showing signs of addiction, two guidance and counseling teachers, one homeroom teacher, and two parents. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure that the most relevant and informative informants were included (Sugiyono, 2019).

Data collection techniques included participant observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and analysis of academic and counseling records. Participant observation allowed the researcher to closely examine students' actual behaviors both inside and outside the classroom, including their learning concentration and social interactions. In-depth interviews with students, teachers, and parents explored subjective experiences, perceptions, and the impact of online game addiction on the learning process. Documentation, such as attendance records, report cards, and counseling reports, was used as part of data triangulation to strengthen the validity of the findings (Moleong, 2021).

Data analysis followed the model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which involves three stages: data reduction (selecting relevant information), data display (organizing information in descriptive narrative form), and conclusion drawing and verification through source and method triangulation (Miles et al., 2014). Data trustworthiness was ensured through source and method triangulation, as well as member checking with selected informants to confirm the accuracy of the interpretations. These techniques enhanced the credibility of the research findings (Flick, 2023)

Result and Discussion

1. Students' Emotional Dynamics

Observations at MA Futuhiyyah Kudu Semarang revealed that students addicted to online games tended to experience significant emotional fluctuations. They appeared enthusiastic when discussing games but quickly lost interest once lessons began. This aligns with Goleman's finding that emotional regulation is key to maintaining focus and self-control in learning activities (Goleman, 2018, p. 54). Interviews with guidance and counseling (BK) teachers indicated that some students often showed signs of anxiety when unable to access games. They admitted feeling "restless and uneasy" when their phones were confiscated. This phenomenon corresponds to the concept of withdrawal symptoms in addiction studies, where individuals feel anxious when disconnected from their source of pleasure (Young, 2017, p. 83). These emotional changes were not only negative but also affected students' social interactions. Some became more easily irritated, even in situations they previously considered normal. Santrock explains that adolescents who struggle to regulate emotions tend to face obstacles in building healthy social relationships (Santrock, 2021, p. 102).

Documentation from BK teachers showed an increase in reports of student disputes, some triggered by arguments about online games. This underscores the link between excessive game involvement and low frustration tolerance (Griffiths, 2019, p. 41). Interviews with parents confirmed that emotional changes were also visible at home. Children often isolated themselves, refused to engage in conversation, and expressed anger when asked to stop playing. This aligns with Gross's view that poor emotional regulation can exacerbate family conflict (Gross, 2015, p. 74). From a religious perspective, Islamic Education (PAI) teachers noted that some students experienced reduced focus in worship because their minds were distracted by games. In Islam, this indicates weak *muraqabah* (awareness of God's supervision), which is essential for inner peace (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. 112).

The researcher also noted a phenomenon of "reversed emotion," in which students felt happy when playing games despite facing academic problems. This reflects a maladaptive coping mechanism, where games are used as an escape from academic stress (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017, p. 9). Some students admitted to playing games to avoid boredom and stress. However, instead of solving their problems, they became trapped in a cycle of emotional exhaustion. Lazarus refers to this as unproductive emotion-focused coping (Lazarus, 1991, p. 136).

BK teachers emphasized that students with unstable emotions tend to struggle with effective learning. This is consistent with Deci and Ryan's motivation theory, which asserts that emotional well-being is a prerequisite for healthy learning motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 68). Thus, the emotional dynamics of online-game-addicted students at MA Futuhiyyah Kudu Semarang can be categorized as unstable, vulnerable to disruption, and maladaptive. This condition affects not only mood but also social interactions, religious practices, and academic performance.

2. Behavioral Changes

Classroom observations showed that students addicted to online games often appeared passive and unfocused during lessons. Some would bow their heads while holding their phones or daydream when the teacher explained the material. This indicates reduced on-task behavior, which Slavin (2018, p. 247) identifies as a key indicator of learning success. BK teachers reported that some students began procrastinating on assignments, completing them only near the deadline. This aligns with Steel's (2010, p. 66) findings that procrastination is a common effect of excessive involvement in instant entertainment activities such as online gaming.

Interviews with homeroom teachers revealed that students addicted to games were often late to class. They admitted staying up late to play, making it difficult to wake up early. Carskadon (2011, p. 59) notes that sleep pattern disruptions like this can reduce cognitive function and concentration in school. Disciplinary records showed a significant increase in unauthorized phone use among students identified as addicted. This is consistent with Kuss & Griffiths's (2012, p. 356) research, which found that digital addiction often leads individuals to disregard formal rules.

Students' social interactions also shifted. Instead of participating in extracurricular activities, they preferred gathering to discuss game strategies or play together via local networks. Vygotsky (1978, p. 88) emphasizes that social interaction is essential for cognitive development, so such behavior may hinder growth. Parents complained that their children became less active in helping with household chores and often went straight to their rooms to play after school. According to Bronfenbrenner (2005, p. 133), behavioral changes at home are strong indicators of the influence of technological environments on child development.

Some students also showed reduced discipline in adhering to study schedules. They admitted difficulty balancing gaming and studying. Zimmerman's (2002, p. 66) self-regulated learning theory states that poor time management is a hallmark of low self-regulation ability. PAI teachers added that student attendance at religious activities such as congregational prayer and afternoon study sessions became inconsistent. This reflects a decline in spiritual engagement, which Abdullah (2020, p. 75) argues can impact the development of religious character.

Interviews with students revealed that some found it difficult to stop playing even after exceeding their allotted time. This is a hallmark of loss of control in behavioral addiction theory (Griffiths, 2019, p. 43). Overall, observed behavioral changes included reduced discipline, lateness, disrupted sleep patterns, neglect of assignments, and decreased participation in social and religious activities. This pattern reinforces the assumption that online game addiction impacts not only academic activities but also shapes persistent negative habits

3. Impact on Learning Motivation

Interviews with students revealed that their intrinsic learning motivation tended to decline after they began playing online games intensively. They admitted that their curiosity about academic subjects had diminished, while their enthusiasm for in-game achievements had increased. According to Deci and Ryan (2000, p. 72), intrinsic motivation decreases when alternative activities are perceived as more emotionally engaging.

BK (guidance and counseling) teachers observed that this decline in motivation was reflected in students' minimal active participation in class. They rarely asked questions or expressed opinions. Schunk et al. (2014, p. 215) explain that low cognitive engagement is an indication of weak academic motivation. Some students admitted that they studied merely to avoid punishment or meet grade requirements, rather than out of a desire to understand the material. This reflects the dominance of compulsory extrinsic motivation, which, according to Ryan and Deci (2017, p. 126), is less effective in promoting long-term learning. Academic records indicated a downward trend in performance in subjects requiring high concentration, such as Mathematics, Arabic, and Physics. Pintrich and Schunk (2002, p. 89) state that focus and persistence are key mediators between motivation and academic achievement.

Interviews with homeroom teachers revealed that students addicted to online games often lacked clear learning goals. They tended to engage in last-minute study sessions before exams. Zimmerman (2002, p. 68) links this to weak goal setting in self-directed learning strategies. One student remarked, "In games, there are missions and rewards, so I feel motivated. In school, there are rarely rewards that make me excited." This statement aligns with gamification theory, which explains that reward systems in games can stimulate dopamine release, thereby boosting short-term motivation (Hamari et al., 2014, p. 305).

PAI (Islamic Education) teachers noted that religious learning motivation was also affected. Students appeared less enthusiastic when studying Qur'anic exegesis or hadith, even when the topics were relevant to their daily lives. From the perspective of Islamic education, this decline reflects a weakening awareness of *thalabul 'ilmi* (seeking knowledge) as a religious obligation (Al-

Attas, 2011, p. 98). Some students reported losing self-confidence due to declining academic performance, which made them even more reluctant to participate in learning activities. According to Bandura (1997, p. 144), low self-efficacy can reinforce a cycle of academic disengagement. BK teachers further noted that students accustomed to instant in-game achievements often became frustrated with the slower pace of school learning. This creates an expectancy gap which, according to Eccles and Wigfield (2002, p. 120), can significantly reduce motivation.

Overall, online game addiction at MA Futuhiyyah Kudu Semarang has led to a decline in both intrinsic and extrinsic learning motivation. Students lose their natural interest, rely heavily on external factors to study, and experience reduced self-confidence, ultimately affecting their overall academic performance.

4. Strategies Implemented

MA Futuhiyyah Kudu Semarang has undertaken various strategies to address online game addiction among students. The first strategy is individual counseling by BK teachers, aimed at helping students recognize their problems and develop healthier time-management habits. According to Corey (2017, p. 210), individual counseling can enhance self-awareness, which is a crucial first step toward behavioral change. BK teachers employed a solution-focused counseling approach, emphasizing students' potential to change habits. This approach is considered effective because it focuses on goal attainment and reinforcement of positive behaviors (De Shazer, 2007, p. 89). Students were guided to create realistic study and gaming schedules and were monitored regularly.

In addition to individual counseling, the school organized awareness sessions for students and parents about the negative impacts of online game addiction. These sessions were based on the principle of digital literacy—the ability to understand and manage technology use wisely (Hobbs, 2010, p. 18). The material covered mental health, academic, and spiritual aspects. To limit gaming access on school premises, a policy was implemented prohibiting mobile phone use outside designated hours. This policy follows the principle of behavior modification, which emphasizes environmental control as a means of reducing addictive behavior (Skinner, 1974, p. 101).

PAI teachers played a role in integrating the values of moderation and self-control into lessons. These values were reinforced through discussions of Qur'anic verses and hadith on the importance of balance in life, such as QS Al-A'raf [7]:31. This integrative approach aligns with the concept of Islamic character education (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. 121). Some teachers also experimented with educational games as learning media, so that students could enjoy engaging experiences while staying connected to the lesson content. According to Gee (2007, p. 34), well-designed game-based learning can increase student engagement and motivation.

Collaboration with parents formed a crucial part of the intervention strategy. BK teachers encouraged parents to set time limits for gaming at home and to provide alternative activities such as sports or religious programs. Epstein (2011, p. 78) asserts that family involvement is highly influential in the success of behavioral interventions.

The school also revitalized extracurricular activities such as scouting, *hadrah* music, and sports to offer alternative outlets that could divert students' attention from gaming. According to Larson (2000, p. 170), participation in positive activities can enhance psychological engagement and reduce risky behaviors. However, teachers acknowledged that the effectiveness of these strategies was still constrained by limited counseling resources, parents' lack of understanding of the psychological impact of game addiction, and students' resistance to gaming restrictions. This reflects Santrock's (2021, p. 154) finding that behavioral interventions require consistent support from multiple parties to achieve optimal results.

In sum, the strategies at MA Futuhiyyah Kudu Semarang are multi-level, involving individual interventions, environmental restrictions, Islamic value education, family collaboration, and the provision of positive alternative activities. Although not yet fully effective, these efforts demonstrate the school's commitment to addressing online game addiction that disrupts students' academic, emotional, and spiritual development

Conclusion

1. Impact of Online Game Addiction on Emotions, Behavior, and Motivation
Online game addiction at MA Futuhiyyah Kudu Semarang has resulted in emotional instability, such as irritability and anxiety; behavioral changes, including decreased discipline, tardiness, disrupted sleep patterns, and reduced participation in social and religious activities; as well as a decline in both intrinsic and extrinsic learning motivation.
2. Measures Implemented by the School
The school has undertaken various strategies, including individual counseling, digital literacy awareness programs, restrictions on mobile phone use, integration of Islamic values into lessons, and the provision of alternative positive activities. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these measures remains limited due to scarce resources, low parental awareness, and student resistance.
3. Implications and the Need for a Holistic Approach
Addressing online game addiction requires a holistic approach involving teachers, parents, and the broader social environment in a synergistic manner. Such an approach should emphasize self-control, balanced technology use, and the values of Islamic moderation to foster character development, enhance discipline, and strengthen students' academic and religious commitment

Suggestions and Recommendations

1. Collaboration Between Teachers, Parents, and the Social Environment
Establish a consistent cooperation mechanism between teachers, parents, and the madrasah to monitor and guide students' use of online games, either through regular meetings or online communication platforms.
2. Strengthening Guidance and Counseling Services
The madrasah is advised to enhance the capacity of guidance and counseling teachers through specialized training in handling digital addiction, so that the interventions provided are more effective, measurable, and sustainable.
3. Integration of Digital Literacy and Islamic Values in Learning
Digital literacy that incorporates principles of moderation, self-control, and ethical media use in accordance with Islamic teachings should be integrated into the curriculum, both in Islamic Religious Education and general subjects.

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